

*Updated August 2009*  
**REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE MINISTRY**  
**Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches**

**MINISTERIAL PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

**Section 1: Board of Ministerial Standards and Education (BMSE)**

1. The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC) have given the BMSE authority to oversee all matters pertaining to ministerial credentials.
2. The CABC authorizes the BMSE to create policies and procedures for the handling of matters involving credentials which shall include the handling of complaints against persons holding credentials with the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC) which policies and procedures shall be published in the Yearbook and presented to all new pastors. These policies and procedures shall apply to all persons who hold or who have held credentials with the CABC.
3. In discharging its mandate of overseeing all matters pertaining to ministerial credentials, the BMSE shall be guided by the following Foundational Statements and Code of Ethics.

**Section 2: Foundational Statements**

**2.1 Theological Foundation**

The Holy Scriptures speak of the Church as the Body of Christ<sup>1</sup> and call its members to live lives that are rooted in Christ<sup>2</sup> and to grow together in love, thanksgiving and service to God and neighbour.<sup>3</sup> To be a Christian is to be a new creation, and part of a new humanity guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The Church is called to exemplify a community of truth, justice and mercy, compassion and reconciliation, mutual service and steadfast faithfulness.<sup>5</sup>

Recognizing both the importance of leadership in the church and the accountability of leaders to the CABC, the BMSE as the credentialing body acknowledges that godly standards are expected of those who serve as spiritual leaders.

Accordingly, we affirm that every person is created in the image of God<sup>6</sup> for loving,

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 12:5; I Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23 [New Revised Standard Version]

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 2:7

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 1:6; John 13:12-17; John 15:12; Matthew 7:12; Luke 10:25-28

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:18-27; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:14-15; John 1:12-14, 16

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5: 18-21; Colossians 1:18-23; I Timothy 5:11-16; Hebrews 13:1-8

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-33; I Corinthians 11:17-22

covenantal relationships with God, others and the world. We believe that peace arises out of right relationships.<sup>7</sup> Personal dignity, freedom and sexual integrity are ensured by faithfulness to just covenants of mutual trust, care and respect. Such covenants undergird the moral framework of our communal life, responsibilities and entitlements.

Professional misconduct cannot be treated by the Church as a private matter since others' attitudes and relationships are bound to be affected. Great care is expected to be exercised in relationships in order to avoid abuses of trust, power, confidentiality and the responsibility of authority.

Because children, adolescents, the infirm and elderly are more vulnerable to the tragic consequences of broken covenants and abusive treatment, special care must be taken to protect them.<sup>8</sup>

In instances where professional misconduct has occurred it is the responsibility of those in leadership (i.e. the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education) to offer assistance to fallen pastoral leaders in order to help them regain personal, spiritual and familial health. In addition, where repentance has been demonstrated and to the degree that credibility has been regained, the possibility may exist for fallen pastoral leaders to be restored to a position of ministerial leadership as an accredited or recognized pastoral leader. (footnote Galatians 6:1-2)

## **2.2 Nature of Pastoral Ministry**

For a proper understanding of the policy and guidelines set forth in this document, two things must be highlighted about the nature of the pastoral relationship.

- A. The pastoral relationship is built on trust. Where this trust is betrayed or compromised by professional misconduct, or even questioned by rumour, damage follows in all areas of the church's ministry. Church members, counselees, colleagues and adherents must be able to expect dependable pastoral oversight without the intrusion of professional misconduct.
- B. By virtue of education, ordination, recognition, title, status and/or reputation, the pastoral leader is in a position to exert power. Therefore, no sexual liaison/contact outside the marital relationship is proper, whether or not the pastoral leader is functioning in a ministry role. Pastoral leaders must view themselves as holding their professional status continually.

NOTE: Pastoral leaders who are single must demonstrate discretion in any dating relationship.

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<sup>7</sup> Romans 5:1; Acts 10:36

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 18: 1-7; Mark 9: 35-37; Matthew 25: 31-46; James 1:27; Luke 17:1-2

## **Section 2A: Exercise of Pastoral Ministry Regarding Same Sex Marriage**

Pastoral leaders accredited by the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches shall not officiate or co-officiate at a same-sex marriage ceremony.

A complaint that a pastoral leader accredited by the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches has officiated or co-officiated at a same-sex marriage ceremony will be investigated by the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education according to the Board's protocol (Section 5-7). If the complaint is proven to be true, the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education will revoke his/her authorization by the Convention to perform marriages. The Board will also take appropriate disciplinary measures according to its protocol (Section 5.6), which could ultimately lead to the loss of the individual's standing as an accredited minister within our Convention.

## **Section 3: Code of Ethics**

### **3.1 Preamble**

The call to Pastoral Leadership is a high and sacred calling, expressed through a life of service and modeled after the life of Jesus Christ. Implicit in the call to ministry are biblically-based prescriptions for relationships with God, His family and the world. Jesus clearly and succinctly outlines the basis for Christian character and integrity in Mark 12:30-31 when He summarizes the commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"[and] "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Pastoral leaders recognized or accredited by the CABC, while not expected to be without fault, must maintain a high standard of integrity in the church, the home and the community (1 Timothy 3:2).

### **3.2 Rationale**

Every Christian is ultimately accountable to God. Those serving as pastoral leaders are also accountable to the local church(es), ministry or agency in which they serve. Because the BMSE has been mandated by the CABC to oversee all matters pertaining to ministerial credentials, all pastoral leaders within the CABC will be held accountable to this code of ethics. Written allegations of non-compliance with the Code of Pastoral Ethics will only be considered by the BMSE when they are of such a serious nature that they fall with the definition of professional misconduct. (see the Protocol for Cases of Alleged Professional Misconduct).

### **3.3 Pastoral Ethics**

Section 3.3 is written in the first person for strength of emphasis.

#### **3.3.1 Relationship with God**

##### Soul Care:

Called as a servant of God to pastoral leadership (Matthew 4:19, Ephesians 4:11), I understand the primary importance of my relationship with Christ. This call is reflected in who I am in Christ, as well as in what I do.

Therefore, I will seek God in humility and actively cultivate my relationship with Him through such spiritual disciplines as:

- worship (Romans 12:1, Revelation 5:12-13, John 4: 23-24)
- study of the Word of God (II Timothy 3:16, Luke 11:28)
- prayer (Matthew 6:5, Luke 11:2-10)
- confession of sin (I John 1:9, James 5:16)
- repentance and a willingness to seek reconciliation (Acts 3:19, Luke 17:3)
- a willingness to forgive (Matthew 5:14-15, Matthew 6: 14-15)
- fellowship (I John 1: 3, 6, 7)
- sacrificial service (Philippians 2:1-11)

#### Self Care:

Seeking to be a vessel for God's use, I will endeavour to:

- put on the character of Christ (Romans 13:14, Colossians 3:1-17)
- maintain physical and mental wellness (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- be sexually pure (Ephesians 5:3, I Corinthians 6:18)
- practice sound financial management (1 Timothy 6:5-10, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7);
- be truthful (Ephesians 4:15)
- be a person of integrity (Ephesians 5:8-10, I Peter 1: 13-16)

### **3.3.2 Relationship within the Family Unit**

The call to Christian ministry affects the whole family and not just the one called. Thus, whether I am married or single, with children or without, I will strive to be sensitive to the needs of those in my household.

As far as it depends on me, and as God enables me, my relationship with my spouse will be modeled after the sacrificial love of Christ. I will uphold the vows of marriage and will honor the principle of mutuality, submitting to my spouse out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21-33).

If I am married and have children, I will, together with my spouse, heed God's clear instructions concerning my responsibility for the nurture and instruction of my children (Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Ephesians 6:1-4).

### **3.3.3 Relationship With Those Among Whom I am Called to Serve**

#### When Dealing with a Search Committee:

- I will candidate with only one church at a time;
- I will not knowingly compete with another pastor for a call;
- I will honestly present my strengths, weaknesses and challenges and will decline any call for which I am not suited.

### While Serving:

Believing that God has called me to be a pastoral leader within the CAB, I will, in the power of the Holy Spirit:

- be a person of consistent Christian character and integrity;
- love the people whom God has called me to serve, ministering impartially to their needs and refraining from behaviour that may be divisive;
- help the people of my congregation and/or in my care, to identify, develop, and use their spiritual gifts for ministry for the edification of the Body of Christ;
- endeavour to lead the congregation to practice evangelism, compassion and service to the community and the world;
- consider confidences as a sacred trust not to be divulged without consent of the person involved, or unless there is danger to an individual, their family or society;
- be accountable to those whom I am called to serve, not using my position to exert undue power or influence;
- pray for the specific needs of those whom I am called to serve, as well as for needs in the local community and broader society;
- avoid giving any impression that suggests that I am qualified beyond my level of training, competence, and experience;
- act with integrity in all financial matters;
- responsibly exercise the freedom of the pulpit, speaking the truth of God's Word in love and acknowledging any extensive use of material prepared by someone else;
- encourage the congregation to enjoy fellowship and ministry opportunities with other churches, especially through the Association, Region and Convention;
- refrain from causing or using a conflict within the church I am presently serving to plant a new church;
- not use my influence to alienate my congregation, or any portion of it, from support of the governing body(ies) of the congregation or from support of the denomination. If my convictions change from those held by those with whom I minister, I will voluntarily resign my position, taking no person from the fellowship;
- avoid any perception of conflict of interest, legal or otherwise, by holding no other elected office in the congregation I serve nor acting as a signing officer nor voting at any meeting of a congregational council, board or committee unless otherwise authorized by the church. As a member of the congregation, I am permitted to vote at congregational business meetings.

### When Resigning:

- I will give adequate notice, and will ensure that I deal fairly with the congregation throughout my departure;
- I will encourage the congregation to be open to new directions under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- recognizing that problems may be raised by my staying, if nonetheless I remain in this congregation as a worshiper, I will neither say nor encourage any critical remarks concerning my successor. Instead, I will affirm the pastor. I will see my

role as a supportive and committed lay person, and will submit to the authority of present congregational leadership.

### **3.3.4 Relationship with Colleagues in Christian Ministry**

#### In General:

God calls various people to provide ministry in diverse ways and settings. In submitting to God's authority,

- I will respect the ministries of pastoral colleagues as, together, we seek to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) in the spirit of Matthew 22:37-39.
- Once I have left a particular ministry setting, I will respect the need of that community of faith to bond with others who will serve them. I will not normally participate in events such as weddings and funerals, or provide pastoral care which would normally be handled by the current pastor. If invited to so participate, I will only do so with the blessing of the current pastor.
- I will not entertain or make use of criticisms of a predecessor or of another pastor and will abide by the principles as outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 for resolving any conflict.
- I will be supportive and caring of other pastors and will seek some form of peer support and accountability.

#### Within Pastoral Staff:

*As a member of a pastoral team,*

- I will act and speak with confidence in the other members of the team and will communicate openly and respectfully with them;
- I will respect the corporate wisdom of the staff team;
- I will receive constructive criticism graciously and remain open to suggestions from other members of the team;
- When conflicts arise within the team, I will engage in due process with other team members to seek resolution.

*As a Senior Pastor,*

- I will encourage all staff members and allow them to excel in their work;
- I will assist each staff member to grow in the Christian life and ministry;
- I will allow other staff members to encourage my growth.

*As an Associate Pastor,*

- I will support the leadership position of the Senior Pastor. If circumstances change and I can no longer, in good conscience, support the Senior Pastor, I will either resign or, if unethical or unprofessional conduct is involved, I will seek the counsel of my Regional Minister.

### **3.3.5 Relationship With Association and Convention**

The principle of association is based on the belief that some ministries may be accomplished more effectively by combining the gifts and resources of a number of churches, than by churches working independently. Insofar as any congregation I serve is a member of an Association of Churches, who together comprise the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, I will:

- be supportive of the mission and objectives of the Association and of the CABC;
- make every effort to work in harmony with the Officers, Council and pastors of the Association in which I serve and with the Officers, Council and Staff of the CABC and its agencies;
- consider my responsibilities in the Association/Convention as part of my ministry duties and manage my time to include such involvement;
- promote the Association/Convention and related agencies to my congregation;
- take advantage of opportunities provided through the Association, Region or Convention, to fellowship with other Christian ministers and lay people and to participate in a network of mutual accountability.

### **3.3.6 Relationship to Community**

God's call to His church is to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). Each local congregation, under the servant leadership of the pastor and other Christian leaders, is the embodiment of Christ to the community in which it serves. In order to be a witness of Christ's love for all,

- I will strive to have a positive and visible presence in the community;
- I will seek to understand the community and its history;
- I will seek to contribute to the life of the community beyond the church;
- I will also support, whenever possible, the broader fellowship of Christians within the community, recognizing that my church is an interdependent part of the universal church of Jesus Christ. Where I disagree with the view or position of another pastor or church on a particular issue, whether theological, doctrinal, or social, I will nonetheless remain committed to maintaining the bond of peace.

### **3.4 Church Ethics: Congregation to Pastor Relationship**

The relationship between congregation and pastor is vital to the witness and ministry of any local church. While the BMSE has no authority over individual churches, we offer the following recommendations and urge congregations to honor the unique bond God intends for them to have with each pastor He provides.

- The congregation will undergird their pastor, through prayer and encouragement, in the discharge of all pastoral duties. The church will avoid comparison with other pastors, and will support the pastor in endeavors to witness to the Kingdom of God through community and denominational service;
- The congregation will ensure that the pastor has adequate time for study, continuing education experiences, and personal spiritual growth;
- The congregation will recognize the pastor's need for physical, emotional, and

- spiritual renewal by providing opportunities for weekly rest and annual vacation;
- The congregation will encourage the pastor to maintain wholesome marital and family relationships. They will respect the pastor's family and place no expectations upon the family that they would not place upon themselves;
- The congregation will allow the pastor to exercise the freedom of the pulpit responsibly, for the edification and instruction of the people of God;
- The congregational leadership will work together with the pastor in a relationship of mutual accountability;
- The congregation will respect and honor the freedom of the pastor to be present and give input at meetings of all standing and special committees, commissions, boards, or assemblies convened by the congregation to transact congregational business. However, except for the meetings of the general membership, the pastor will not have voting rights (unless otherwise authorized by the church);
- At each stage of the process of preparing the Budget for the pastor's salary, the church will ensure the pastor has the full right to present his or her needs.

#### **Section 4: Policies and Procedures for Amendment of the Document**

The policies and procedures developed by the BMSE may be amended from time to time in accordance with the following procedure:

##### **4.1 Amendments proposed by the BMSE**

- (a) If the BMSE wishes to amend the policies and procedures, it shall:
  - (i) Give notice of its intention to amend the policies and procedures to all persons holding credentials with CABC by regular mail or email. This notice shall include the actual amendment sought and notice of when the amendment will be considered by the Board which shall be at least sixty days after the date of the notice; and
  - (ii) Mail notice of the intended change to the policies and procedures to all churches in the CABC.
- (b) Any person wishing to comment on the intended change to the policies and procedures may do so in writing to the Chair of the BMSE or may attend and speak to the proposed amendment at the BMSE Meeting identified in the notice.
- (c) After hearing from all persons, if any, who wish to speak to the proposed amendment and after considering all written submissions, if any, the BMSE shall reach a decision concerning the proposed amendment and shall give notice of its decision:
  - (i) by mail or email to all persons who hold credentials with the CABC and
  - (ii) by mail to all CABC churches.
- (d) Any person wishing to appeal the BMSE decision to amend its policies and procedures pursuant to this subsection may do so by giving a written notice to the Chair of the BMSE within sixty days of the notice of the amendment in the policies and procedures being sent to the Churches of the CABC. If no such

written appeal is received by the Chair of the BMSE, the amendment shall be considered final and binding.

- (e) If a notice of appeal is received by the Chair of the BMSE within sixty days of the notice being sent to the Churches of the CABC:
  - (i) The Chair of the BMSE shall pass the notice of appeal on to the President of the CABC for consideration by the Council of the CABC at its next scheduled meeting. The President of the CABC shall, upon receipt of a notice of appeal, request a written response from the Chair of the BMSE, which response shall be copied to the person filing the notice of appeal.
  - (ii) The Council shall consider the notice of appeal at its next scheduled meeting and shall permit both the person seeking to appeal the BMSE's decision and the Chair of the BMSE or designate to present oral submissions to Council.
  - (iii) If the Council elects not to disturb the decision of the BMSE to amend its policies and procedures it shall advise the person who submitted the notice of appeal in writing but no further notice is required and the decision of the Council is final and binding.
  - (iv) If the Council elects to vary or rescind the decision of the BMSE to amend its policies and procedures the decision of Council is also be final and binding. Notice of this decision of the Council shall be given as follows:
    - (a) by mail or email to all persons who hold credentials with the CABC and
    - (b) by mail to all CABC churches.

#### **4.2 Amendments proposed by members of CABC churches or persons who hold or who have held credentials with the CABC**

- (a) Any person who holds or who has held credentials with the CABC or any member of a CABC church may request that the BMSE amend its policies and procedures by submitting a written notice of the requested amendment, together with the reasons for the requested amendment, to the Chair of the BMSE.
- (b) Upon receipt of the requested amendment the Chair of the BMSE shall notify the person requesting the amendment that the requested amendment shall be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the BMSE and invite the person seeking the proposed amendment to attend that meeting to provide oral submissions to the BMSE regarding the proposed amendment.
- (c) After hearing from the person requesting the amendment, if that person wishes to address the BMSE, and after considering the written request for the amendment, the BMSE shall reach a decision concerning the requested amendment.
- (d) If the BMSE elects not to amend its policies and procedures it shall notify in writing the person seeking amendment and shall give reasons as to why it chose not to amend its policies and procedures.

- (e) If the BMSE elects to amend its policies and procedures as a result of the request for an amendment it shall give notice of its decision to amend;
  - (i) by mail or email to all persons who hold credentials with the CABC; and,
  - (ii) by mail to all CABC churches.
  
- (f) Any person wishing to appeal the BMSE's decision to amend its policies and procedures pursuant to this subsection may do so by giving a written notice to the Chair of the BMSE within sixty days of the notice being sent to the churches of the CABC. If no such written appeal is received by the Chair of the BMSE within sixty days of the notice being sent to the churches, the change shall be considered final and binding.
  
- (g) If a notice of appeal is received by the Chair of the BMSE within sixty days of the decision to amend its policies and procedures being sent to the churches of the CABC;
  - (i) The Chair of the BMSE shall pass the notice of appeal on to the President of the CABC for consideration by the Council of the CABC at its next scheduled meeting. The President of the CABC shall, upon receipt of a notice of appeal, request a written response from the Chair of the BMSE which response shall be copied to the person filing the notice of appeal.
  - (ii) The Council shall consider the notice of appeal at its next scheduled meeting and shall permit both the person seeking to appeal the BMSE's decision and the Chair of the BMSE or designate to present oral submissions to Council.
  - (iii) If the Council elects not to disturb the decision of the BMSE to amend its policies and procedures it shall advise the person who submitted the notice of appeal in writing but no further notice is required and the decision of the Council is final and binding.
  - (iv) If the Council elects to vary or rescind the decision of the BMSE to amend its policies and procedures the decision of the Council is also final and binding. Notice of this decision of the Council shall be given as follows;
    - (a) by mail or email to all persons who hold credentials with the CABC and
    - (b) by mail to all CABC churches.

**4.3 A committee appointed by the BMSE shall review and propose revisions to the policies and procedures every three (3) years or as necessary.**